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ABSTRACT

The impact of the reforms instituted at Miami-Dade Community College (MDCC) during the past 5 years is examined in this report. After noting the success of the Academic Alert program in providing earlier classroom assessment and feedback to students, the report looks at the influences of the reinstatement of placement testing for first-time-in-college students carrying 9 credits or more, any student who has earned 15 credits or more, or any student enrolled in English or math courses. The following section presents conclusions drawn from a study of the effects of the implementation of Standards of Academic Progress, highlighting: (1) the suspension of more than 12,000 students and the saving of more than $1.5 million in reduced full-time equivalent funding to MDCC; (2) a decline in the suspension rate over the latest four quarters, indicating improved student performance; and (3) a retention/graduation rate for black students equal to or above the rate before the imposition of the standards. Finally, effects of the policy prohibiting the use of developmental/remedial courses for the fulfillment of graduation requirements are outlined. The report concludes by stressing the positive responses of faculty, staff, and students to the more rigorous academic standards instituted at MDCC. (HB)

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STATUS OF IMPACTS OF THE REFORMS WHICH HAVE BEEN INITIATED AT MIAMI-DADE COMMUNITY COLLEGE DURING THE PAST FIVE YEARS

Research Report No. 83-13

May 1983

John Losak

Miami-Dade Community College

OFFICE OF INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH

JC 830 515

Status of Impacts of the Reforms Which Have Been Initiated
At Miami-Dade Community College During the Past Five Years

Approximately five years ago, Miami-Dade began a wide-ranging reform of curriculum and changes in the student matriculation process which have had impacts on students and faculty. The purpose of this paper is to summarize our current knowledge of these impacts as they relate to specific components of the reforms. It should be recognized that this is a status report based to a large extent on empirical data gathered to date. There are some components of the reforms which have not been in place sufficient time to have measurable impacts and there are components of the reforms which have not yet been assessed.

Academic Alert. The most striking thing that can be said for Academic Alert is that the process has encouraged faculty to provide classroom assessment earlier on in the term for students. The earlier classroom assessment has had a positive impact on faculty and students, providing feedback by which decisions can be made with regard to progress.

Placement Testing. Miami-Dade reinstated placement testing by using the Comparative Guidance and Placement self-scoring program in Reading, Writing, and Computation effective Spring Term 1978-1. The testing was initiated on a gradual basis and was in full implementation by 1981-1. First-time-in-college students carrying 9 credit hours or more, or any student having earned 15 college credits or more, or any student wishing

to enroll in a math or English course is required to be tested. Approximately 90 to 95% of those students required to be tested are tested. The English Placement Test (EPT) is used as a substitute placement examination for those whose native language is not sufficiently developed to allow them to write the CGP. The impact of the testing program has been quite positive, permitting advisors/counselors to work with students in a more enlightened manner regarding their skill levels so that effective placement can be achieved. Studies indicate that both students and faculty alike view positively the reinstatement of this far-reaching assessment program.

Standards of Academic Progress. A recently completed study (Research Report 83-09) clearly demonstrates that the Standards of Academic Progress have a strong association with improved academic performance on the part of students. The interpretation is that the College has, by the Standards, communicated to students that higher expectations are in place and that students are performing at a higher level in order to continue at the College. Since the program has been initiated, more than 12,000 individual students have been suspended. The best estimate is that on the basis of reduction of student credit load, and prohibiting students from reenrolling who were performing poorly, the College has reduced its FTE by a minimum of 1,000 FTE per year, or approximately $1.5 million dollars annually has been saved the taxpayers in reduction of FTE funding to Miami-Dade. Both students and faculty, through surveys, have indicated satisfaction with the implementation of the Standards of Academic Progress. Moreover, the suspension rate has declined each term for the last four terms, suggesting that students are either leaving the College before they become eligible for suspension, or that students are performing better. It appears that

students are performing better since studies have been conducted in which the pool of students who, on the basis of credits earned, would be eligible for suspension have been compared with the actual number and percentage of students who were suspended and the percentage rate is still showing decline. Many were concerned that the Standards would discriminate against minority students. At first, it appeared the concerns were warranted, but more recent data show the black retention/graduation rate now equal to or slightly above the pre-Standards rate. The attached figures and tables reflect the initial negative impact on black students and later full recovery. As one example, the graduation rate after three years and one term for those entering 1979-1 is as high as after six years for those black students entering 1976-1.

Changes in Remedial/Developmental Programs. One of the major changes initiated was to instate a policy which prohibits the use of developmental/remedial courses from counting toward graduation. This was accomplished in the Fall Term 1982. There are two studies which indicate that the use of remedial/developmental courses may be having positive effects. The first study is based on results from the CLAST test of October 1982. Of the students at Miami-Dade who scored in the top third and had a higher group mean than students throughout the State including State University System students, 17%, or 1 in 6, had taken developmental courses. It is clear from this information that simply because a student takes a developmental class, one cannot make the assertion that the student is not college material. Another study indicates that even among those lowest scoring students, i.e., those students who score below the 10th percentile on all three College placement examinations, 22.7% achieved some reasonable measure of success defined as having either graduated or earned 30 credits with a 2.0 at Miami-

Dade. (Research Report No. 83-13)

Perhaps some of the most impressive, positive impacts can be garnered from qualitative impressions in addition to the numerical information provided above. Faculty, students, and staff are virtually all in favor of more rigorous standards and have applauded the impacts of these changes. A survey of students in remedial classes indicated that 80% of those responding viewed positively their remedial experiences. To a large extent, most of the changes are built on a foundation of firm knowledge in learning theory for which studies have consistently shown over the years that students perform up to levels of expectations. Miami-Dade has raised its expectations over a period of the last five years for students and students have responded accordingly in a positive manner. To the extent that most educators believe the curriculum should be rooted firmly in learning theory and applications, Miami-Dade has simply followed this path.

For the future, more studies are planned to assess the impacts and more particularly to focus on curriculum. As one example, beginning with the Fall term 1983, a rigorous study will be undertaken to ask the following question: Do students who enroll in remedial/developmental courses perform the same as or differently than like students who go directly into regular courses without developmental/remedial help? This research project will be able to directly ascertain the efficacy of the remedial/developmental curriculum at Miami-Dade.

Figure 1

TOTAL ALL ETHNIC

THREE-YEAR GRADUATION PLUS RE-ENROLLMENT RATE

FIRST-TIME-IN-COLLEGE STUDENTS

FALL 1976, 1977, 1978, AND 1979

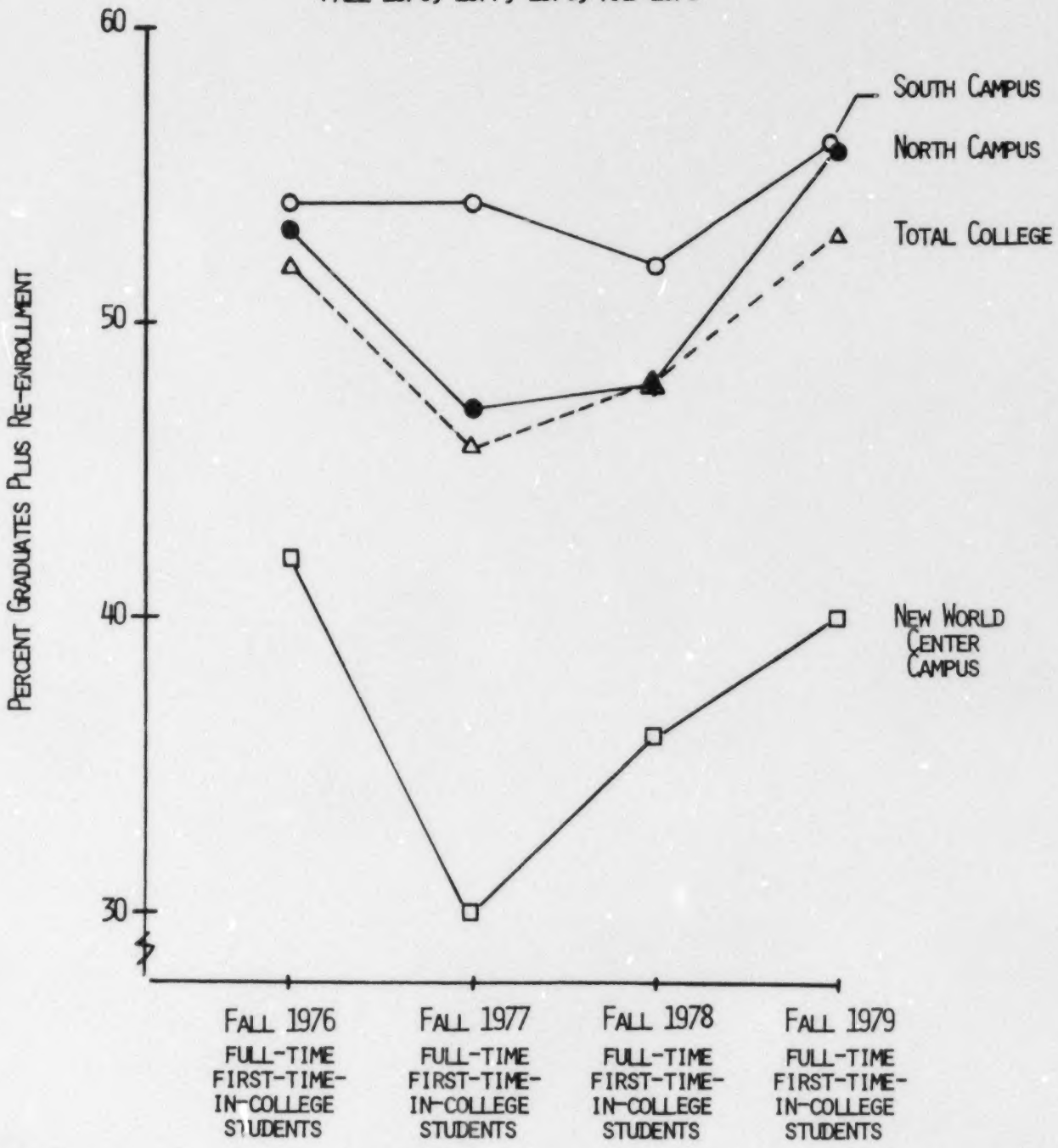

Figure 2

BLACK NON-HISPANIC

THREE YEAR GRADUATION PLUS RE-ENROLLMENT RATE

FIRST-TIME-IN-COLLEGE STUDENTS

FALL 1976, 1977, 1978 AND 1979

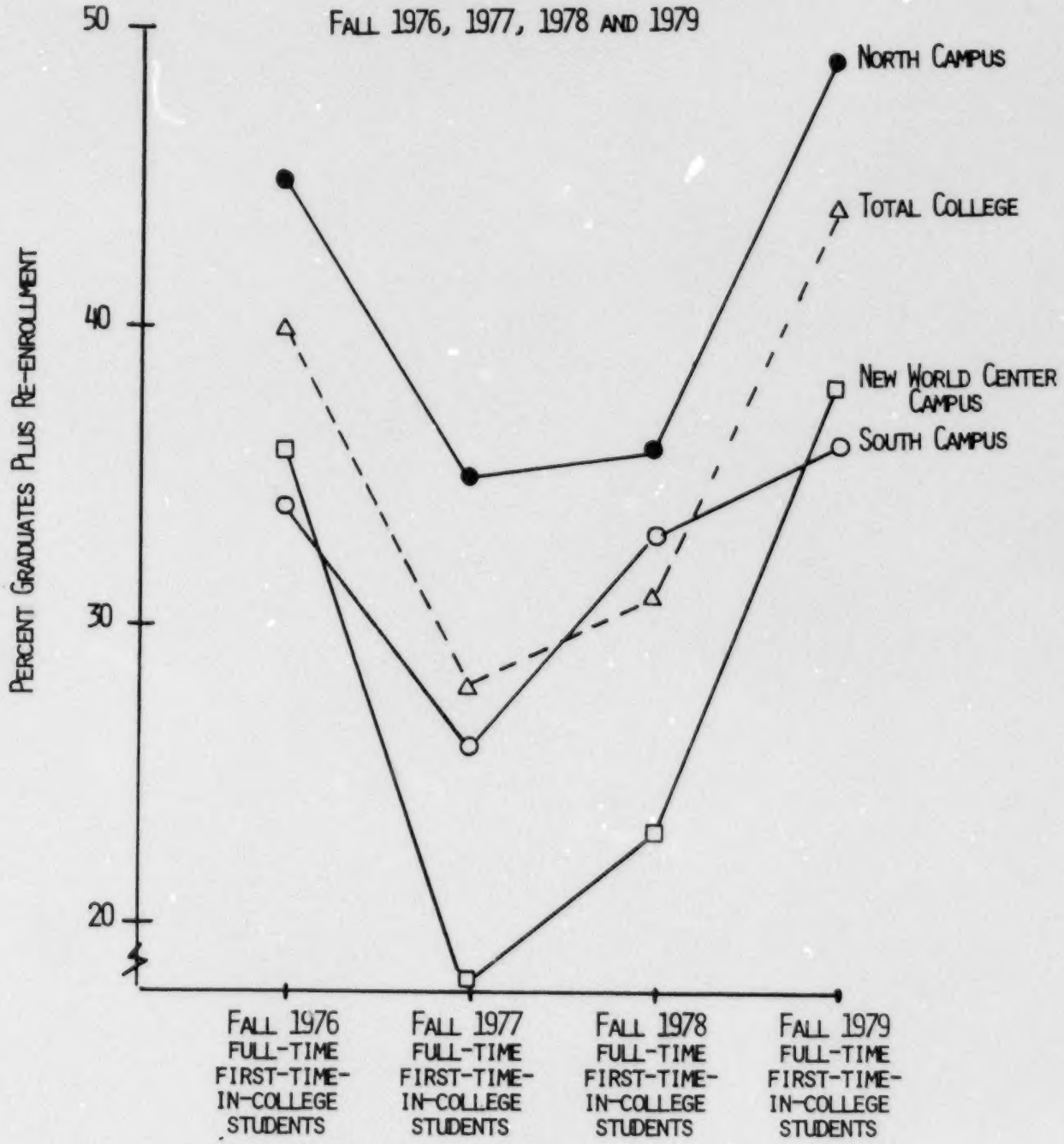

Table 1

College-Wide

Enrollment and Cumulative Graduation Rate per 100 Full-Time First-time-in-College Students Closing Fall Terms

Black Non-Hispanic

Consecutive Major Terms	76-1 (N= 1,164)		77-1 (N= 1,293)		78-1 (N= 1,037)		79-1 (N= 871)		80-1 (N= 856)		81-1 (N= 681)	
	Enrolled	Grad	Enrolled	Grad	Enrolled	Grad	Enrolled	Grad	Enrolled	Grad	Enrolled	Grad
Fall 1	100		100		100		100		100		100	
Winter 1	79		77		73		78		81		79	
Fall 2	56	1	46	1	46	1	54		56		54	1
Winter 2	55	3	42	3	39	3	48	3	50	2		
Fall 3	30	12	23	10	25	10	27	15	30	11		
Winter 3	24	16	17	11	19	12	24	20				
Fall 4	11	20	10	15	9	16	11	24				
Winter 4	11	21	9	16	9	17						
Fall 5	7	22	6	17	6	18						
Winter 5	6	22	6	17								
Fall 6	5	23	4	18								
Winter 6	5	23										

Data Source: Longitudinal Master File, SAS Analysis.

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